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Gen. Taylor Goes to Washington . . .

Just What Mr. Kennedy Needs

It is too early to be sure what Gen. Maxwell Taylor's appointment as "Military Representative of the President" really means. One thing is clear: the White House staff will gain a tough, capable pro, seasoned and knowledgeable, with a mind to match those of the President's cluster of professors.

General Taylor is the kind of man the Administration needs.

There are dangers in the proliferation of White House aides. The defense-and-foreign-policy command structure is already confused, resembling the traditional pyramids less than it does a mobile made of intersecting, and frequently shifting, planes. Operational authority given to White House advisers has undercut supposedly responsible departmental officials. High policy has seemed at times to be batted about on unmarked courts by eager amateurs, while the referee—Mr. Kennedy—tried to watch too many games at once.

One characteristic of the White

House staff structure has been its informality, not so much disorganized as unorganized, in which the interplay of personalities seems to count for more than job titles. The outlines of General Taylor's own responsibilities are as yet imprecise. He is to be a staff officer, without command function, and is not to be interposed in any command sense between the President and the Joint Chiefs. Yet there is a certain ambiguity inherent in his relationships, which is going to call for considerable tact on both his part and the President's if sensitive toes are not to be bruised to the detriment of the effective functioning of the present command structure.

As the military man with, presumably, readiest access to the President's ear, the general will in effect be a watchdog on Joint Chiefs, Pentagon and C. I. A., and he already has been given a specific assignment (Berlin) in which State is deeply involved.

It is the sort of role in which an impetuous novice could cause havoc.

But this is precisely what General Taylor is not. He has held top Army commands long enough to appreciate the niceties of organization as well as to beware the pitfalls of bureaucracy, whether military or civilian.

As a former Army Chief of Staff (and J. C. S. member), he knows his way around Washington. He has a searching, scholarly mind. He was an early advocate of military policies now accepted by the Administration. He is a thorough professional in military affairs, a field in which President Kennedy obviously needs expert and disinterested advice.

The chief danger is that General Taylor's staff status will be compromised by operational assignments, throwing him athwart the established chains of command and undercutting both the authority and the confidence of those with whom he has to deal. This is a danger—and a temptation—only President Kennedy himself can guard against.